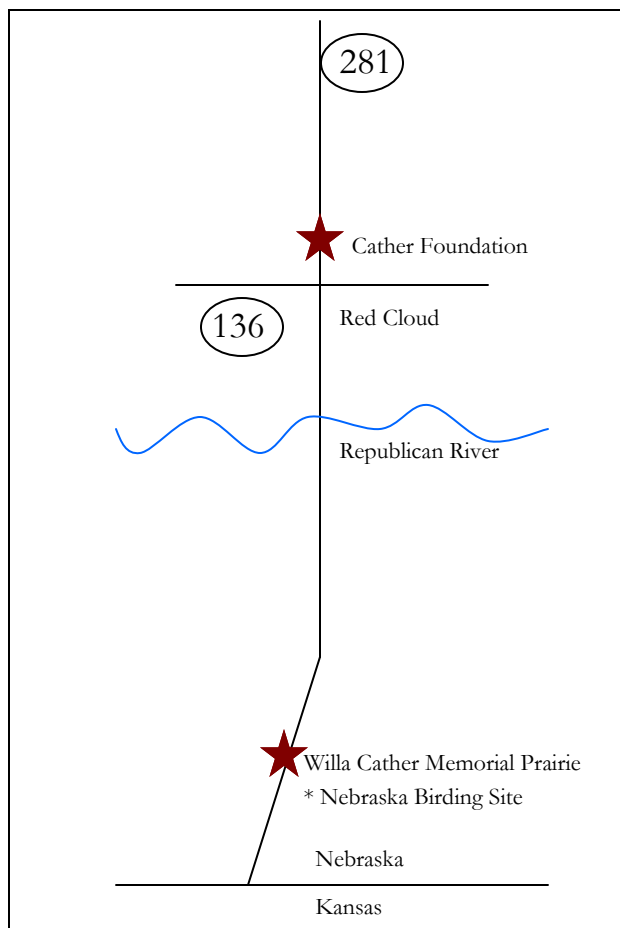


The Willa Cather Foundation acquired the 608-acre Willa Cather Memorial Prairie in the spring of 2006 in order to restore and conserve the rare native grasses, plant life, and wildlife of its delicate ecology.

Noticeable changes since the acquisition include the removal of over 6,000 non-native trees that inhibit the growth of indigenous plants such as the purple prairie clover, purple coneflower, big bluestem, and more. Cather's beloved, native cottonwoods remain.

We are trying to return this land to its pre-1900 conditions, a time before overgrazing, farming, and the encroachment of man and foreign plant species.

This restoration and conservation process is integral in fostering the mission statement of the Willa Cather Foundation. The preservation of the Prairie is part of a holistic approach to the study of America's art, history, and culture through the works of Willa Cather, who was a great champion of prairie lands. As Carl Linstrum observes in *O Pioneers!*, "the land wanted to be left alone, to preserve its own fierce strength, its peculiar, savage kind of beauty, its uninterrupted mournfulness;" we strive to be a part of the land's struggle back to itself.



**Located just 5 miles south of Red Cloud  
near the Kansas-Nebraska border.**

Named a Nebraska Birding Site by the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition



**Willa Cather Memorial Prairie**

**Willa Cather Foundation  
413 North Webster Street  
Red Cloud, NE 68970  
402-746-2653**

**[www.WillaCather.org](http://www.WillaCather.org)**

*"That shaggy grass country had gripped me with  
a passion that I have never been able to shake.  
It has been the happiness and curse of my life."*

—  
Willa Cather







### Louisiana Wormwood

The Lakota tribe sometimes burned this native plant as incense, believing that it could drive away evil influences. Also known as sage.



### Purple Poppymallow

Native Americans often boiled its roots and drank the liquid to ease intestinal pain. Burning the dry roots and inhaling the smoke was thought to cure headaches and bronchial colds.



### Rough Fleabane

Native Americans used Fleabane to make a tea, and to treat sore mouths, rheumatism, lameness and other ailments. It's an attractive plant for white-tailed deer.



### Black Medic

In high-quality prairies, Black Medic becomes an understory plant that can tolerate the shade created by tall prairie plants and grasses.



### Upright Prairie Coneflower

Commonly grown as an ornamental flower. Cheyenne Indians used it to create a solution for drawing out rattlesnake poison and curing poison ivy.



### Evening Primrose

Flowers open in the late afternoon and close in late morning. Amerindians used the native forb to treat whooping cough, hiccups, and asthma.



### Buckbrush

The fruits and seeds of this shrub are a food source for pheasants, prairie chickens, sharptail grouse, and songbirds. Waterfowl are known to nest under it.



### Silverleaf Scurfpea

These plants break off near the ground in early fall, and their seeds are scattered by the winds as they tumble. Seeds may be poisonous to animals and humans.



### Blacksamson

Blacksamson was used by Native Americans to cure a variety of ailments, such as headaches, stomach cramps, venomous bites, sore throats, and more. Also known as Echinacea.



### Common Yarrow

If the flower of this plant is ingested by a cow, the milk will have an unpleasant taste. This native perennial was used during the Civil War to treat wounds.



### Butterfly Milkweed

One of the more showy forbs native to Nebraska, Butterfly Milkweed is easily transplanted into flower gardens.



### Sensitive Brier

This perennial forb is a good indicator of range condition; it decreases when land is overgrazed.



### Lead Plant

Because of its high protein content, Lead Plant has a high forage value. It's a great indicator for range condition, because it decreases with grazing.



### Western Salsify

Though often thought of as a weed, it is not overly aggressive and therefore rarely needs controlling. After flowering, it resembles a large dandelion.



### Dotted Gayfeather

Also called Blazing Star, this forb was used by Plains Indians to improve appetites. They also fed the corms to their horses to enhance their speed.



### Western Ragweed

Several Amerindian tribes used this in tea mixtures for medicinal uses, and the Kiowa even combined it with sages for use in sweathouses. Is also a major cause of hay fever allergies.



### Jerusalem Artichoke

These flowering perennial herbs feature thickened, tube-bearing rootstocks. The underground parts may be cooked and eaten.



### Catnip

Catnip is a member of the mint family, and when crushed, the leaves release a volatile, mint-scented oil that is irresistible to cats.



### Western Wheatgrass

This native grass is largely found in the Great Plains. Its stem and leaves are bluish-green, which make it easy to spot. It is a cool season grass and goes dormant in the summer.



### Prairie Wildrose

Although it's not poisonous, this forb does feature many small thorns. Native Americans used the inner bark to make tobacco.



### Foxtail Barley

This native grass grows in the cool season and is found throughout Nebraska in wet-land range sites. Hairs from the seeds can cause mouth sores if grazed. The Lakota name means "one uses it to tickle the face."



### Common Mullein

These forbs can grow up to seven feet tall and produce thousands of seeds, which can lay dormant in the soil for as long as 100 years. A methanol extract can be used as an insecticide for mosquito larvae.



### Virginia Groundcherry

The fruits of this forb are poisonous when they're green, and are often blamed for sheep poisoning. American Indians loved the ripe fruit and made sauces from it.



### Hoary Vervain

This native perennial is found throughout Nebraska on rangelands, pastures, and roadsides where overgrazing has occurred. Also known as Woolly Verbena.



### Slimflower Scurfpea

Lakota made tea from the roots of this forb and burned the leaves in order to repel mosquitoes. Also called wild alfalfa, this plant is not palatable to cattle and increases with heavy grazing.



### Cattail

Capable of growing up to 10 feet tall, Cattails were often used by Native Americans as down padding for infant diapers. Its pollen is starchy and can be used as a flour substitute.



### Yellow Sweetclover

This is a nitrogen-rich biennial that is sometimes used to improve soil quality. White Sweetclover is nearly identical, distinguished only by its white flowers.



The Prairie restoration project is funded largely by a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust.